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ABSTRACT

The manual, the first of 16 documents on the accreditation program conducted by the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped, presents a step-by-step account of the accreditation process. Covered are such aspects as the preparation of the statement of philosophy of service, suggestions for doing the self-study, general characteristics of the on-site review, decisions which the Commission on Accreditation can make, and costs of seeking and maintaining accreditation.

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Section A

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SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE | 1979 Edition

Manual of Procedures

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION COUNCIL
For Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped
79 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

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A

SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDES

This self-study and evaluation guide is designed to be used in combination with other guides, listed below, available from the National Accreditation Council. An organization undertaking a self-study in applying for accreditation needs to use the following. *A*, either *B-1* or *B-2*, all *C* sections, those *D* sections for the services provided, an *E* form for certain staff members and *F*.

Section	Title and Edition
A	*Manual of Procedures (1979)*
B-1	*Agency Profile (1979)*
B-2	*School Profile (1979)*
C-1	*Function and Structure (1977)*
C-2	*Accounting for Services and Finances (1976)*
C-3	*Personnel Administration and Volunteer Service (1968)*
C-4	*Physical Facilities (1975)*
C-5	*Public Relations and Fund Raising (1968)*
D-2A	*Orientation and Mobility Services (1977)*
D-2E	*Orientation and Mobility Services (Dog Guide Programs) (1968)*
D-3	*Rehabilitation Centers (1968)*
D-4	*Workshop Services (1976)*
D-5	*Social Services (1968)*
D-6	*Vocational Services (1976)*
D-7	*Production of Reading Materials (1970)*
D-8	*Rehabilitation Teaching Services (1977)*
D-15	*Preschool Services (from Birth to Six) (1979)*
D-16	*Other Service Program (1979)*
D-20	*Curriculum Planning and Evaluation (1979)*
D-21	*Program for Multihandicapped Students (1979)*
D-22	*Program for K-12 Students (1979)*
D-23	*Program for Independent Living (1979)*
D-24	*Educational Resources Program (1979)*
D-25	*Leisure Education (1979)*
D-26	*Residential Living Program (1979)*
D-27	*Health Services (1979)*
D-28	*Educational Diagnostic and Counseling Services (1979)*
E	*Individual Staff Member Information Form (1977)*
F	*Evaluation Summary and Report (1979)*

Sections *D-2A* through *D-8* are applicable primarily to "agencies" and *D-20* through *D-28* primarily to "schools." *D-15* is used for preschool services in any setting. Similarly, *D-16* is used by all organizations for services for which NAC does not have specific standards such as radio reading service or special summer program.

1977 - 1978

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CONTENTS

Self-Study and Evaluation Guides iii

Commissions on Accreditation and Standards iv

Acknowledgments vi

Introduction vii

Background, Policies and Procedures

1. Why "Go NAC?" 1
2. General Policies 5
3. Ten Steps to Accreditation 10
4. Decision to Make Formal Application 11
5. Preparing the Statement of Philosophy of Service 11
6. Planning and Conducting the Self-Study 14
7. Submitting the Report to NAC 21
8. Planning for the On-Site Review 22
9. The Preliminary Visit 22
10. The On-Site Review 23
11. Receipt of the On-Site Review Report 24
12. Decision by the Commission on Accreditation 24
13. Becoming an Accredited Member of NAC 26
14. Costs 27

Appendix A: Accreditation Budget Worksheet 28

Appendix B: Evaluation Rating System Used in *C* and *D* Sections 30

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This *Manual* brings together the combined thinking of the Commission on Accreditation and the Commission on Standards. It includes refinements to the 1977 edition, based on extensive input derived from a major standards revision project conducted in 1977-78.

From the field tests and national reviews of drafts of revised and additional self-study guides came numerous comments and suggestions for improving procedures which have been incorporated in this *Manual*. And, of course, the experience NAC has gained in its first twelve years of operations has contributed greatly to the gradual improvement of its procedures. These improvements, expressed in the 1977 edition, have been carried forward and expanded in this 1979 edition.

The Commission on Standards in November 1978 reviewed the *Manual* for consistency with NAC's standards and recommended its adoption. The Commission on Accreditation similary studied the procedures set forth in the *Manual* for consistency with its governing Policies. In December 1978, it approved these procedures for use in accreditation.

Sincere appreciation is extended to the following foundations whose financial support contributed substantially toward this revision as part of the 1977-78 standards revision project.

The Bodman Foundation, New York, New York;
The J. M. Foundation, New York, New York;
M. D. Anderson Foundation, Houston, Texas;
The New York Community Trust, New York, New York;
Sunnen Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri.

Under the leadership of Dr. Richard W. Bleecker, the Council's staff contributed to the refinement of this draft based on its extensive experience with accreditation. The principal writer was Huesten Collingwood.

A

MANUAL OF PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

This *Manual* contains basic information concerning the background, policies and procedures of the accreditation program conducted by the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped (NAC).

It begins with a brief review of the origins of accreditation and the basic characteristics of all accreditation systems. The reasons why NAC was established are presented along with a brief description of its operating structure and general policies relating to accreditation. The benefits and values of NAC accreditation are discussed.

The core of the *Manual* is a step-by-step presentation of the various steps in the accreditation process. These include: the preparation of the statement of philosophy of service; detailed suggestions on doing the self-study, which is a key part of the process; the general characteristics of the on-site review and an outline of the decisions which the Commission on Accreditation can make on applications for accreditation or reaccreditation.

The *Manual* concludes with a brief discussion of the dollar costs of seeking and maintaining accreditation. An accreditation budget worksheet is appended to help in planning. A second appendix contains the evaluation rating system used to assess the organization's performance in the light of NAC's standards.

The *Manual* contains information designed to be helpful to all persons involved in the organization's application for accreditation or reaccreditation. It is basic reading for members of the governing authority or general advisory committee which is responsible for endorsing the initial decision to seek accreditation. It will be helpful to the organization's administration in budgeting the money and personnel resources needed. The self-study coordinating committee will find it helpful in establishing timetables and procedures for subcommittees. Finally, members of the subcommittees will find the *Manual* useful in understanding the whole process and their roles and responsibilities in the self-study.

This 1979 edition replaces the 1977 edition and incorporates refinements growing out of the 1977-78 standards revision projects which included extensive field testing of revised self-study and evaluation guides for specialized schools for the blind and visually handicapped. Unlike the two separate manuals published in 1968, one for "agencies" and the other for "schools", this edition has been designed for both categories of organizations.

Although this *Manual* describes the general features of the on-site review, additional guidelines are provided at the appropriate time to assist in planning the detailed logistics for the on-site review. Similarly, although this *Manual* is generally applicable to the five year self-reassessment process, NAC provides additional guidelines to organizations applying for reaccreditation.

A

MANUAL OF PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. WHY "GO NAC?"

1.1 THE NATURE OF ACCREDITATION.

Most organizations, commercial, governmental and voluntary, are concerned about the quality of the goods they produce and the services they perform. Efficient ways of assessing and improving quality are sought by all. Accreditation, a uniquely American creation, is a voluntary method of assessment leading toward improved quality. This method was first established early in this century by leaders in the medical community who were concerned about the quality of medical education. From serving as a mechanism for improving the quality of professional preparation of physicians by application of standards, accreditation expanded to stimulate improvements in the quality of education offered by most types of schools and colleges. Later, accreditation systems were established for direct service agencies such as hospitals and rehabilitation and social service organizations.

Virtually all accrediting programs share five, basic characteristics:

- Standards are promulgated and periodically updated
- Self-study procedures are used by organizations or programs applying for accreditation to appraise for themselves the extent to which they meet the standards and where improvements are in order
- On-site evaluations are conducted to evaluate adherance to the standards and to report back to the applicant and to the body responsible for deciding on accreditation;
- A published list of accredited members is maintained
- Reassessment is conducted periodically to determine that continued accreditation is warranted

1.2 PRECURSOR TO NAC.

From 1953 until 1967 the American Association of Workers for the Blind administered the award of a "Seal of Good Practice" to interested agencies which subscribed to a "Code of Ethics" initially relating to such topics as board representation, fund raising and public relations. Although the Code was ammended annually, and a special Study Committee labored for over two years to more fully expand the Code, by 1964 it had become apparent that the resources of the Ethics Committee were inadequate to establish and maintain comprehensive standards for the field.

In addition to weaknesses in the scope of the Code of Ethics, there was no provision for on-site verification. Decisions were necessarily made solely on materials submitted by the applicant organization which led to fears that gaining the "Seal of Good Practice" could easily be construed to mean more than it really did.

1.3 NAC CREATED.

Leaders in the field sought another means to achieve what the "Seal of Good Practice" could not do. In 1961 the American Foundation for the Blind initiated plans which eventuated in the creation in 1964 of an independent, ad hoc Commission on Standards and Accreditation of Services for the Blind. COMSTAC, as this group came to be called, had a two-fold mission: to formulate national standards for agencies and schools which were the principal providers of specialized services for blind and visually handicapped persons, and to recommend a means by which such organizations could be stimulated to meet the standards.

The first result was the publication in late 1966 of *THE COMSTAC REPORT: Standards for Strengthened Services.** This work, for the first time, made available to agencies and schools for the blind and visually handicapped in the United States comprehensive standards for administration and service programs.

The second result was the establishment of the National Accreditation Council (NAC) to serve as the ongoing vehicle for application of these standards through accreditation. Achievement of accreditation conveys public recognition that an organization meets nationally accepted standards for quality of services for blind and visually handicapped persons, responsible management and public accountability.

NAC opened its doors in January, 1977.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF NAC

Incorporated in the State of New York as a not-for-profit organization, NAC has a corporate membership made up of accredited agencies and schools, the Board of Directors and sponsoring and supporting organizations. The corporate members meet annually to elect persons to the Board of Directors to review the financial condition of the corporation and to act on other matters brought before them. The Bylaws provide that one third of the Board members elected each year are members of or recommended by national organizations of blind or visually handicapped persons. Other members of the Board are drawn from professional leaders in work with the blind and from the business, civic and public service communities.

The annual membership meetings and all Board meetings are open to the public and are held in different parts of the country each year in order to encourage as many interested persons to attend as possible.

The Board is the primary governing authority of the National Accreditation Council. An Executive Committee is authorized to act for the Board between meetings.

*_THE COMSTAC REPORT: Standards for Strengthened Services._ New York: National Accreditation Council, 1966.

The Board vests authority for accreditation and reaccreditation with the Commission on Accreditation in order to assure the independence of this process.

Responsibility for preparing drafts of additional or revised standards is carried by the Commission on Standards. The Commission appoints national technical committees to draft proposed standards and to elicit broad input from the field, consumers and the general public in refining the drafts.

The third major program arm of NAC is the Commission for Advancement of Standards which works on an ongoing basis to foster understanding and use of NAC's standards.

NAC's office is located in New York City. It is here that NAC's every-day work is carried out and the activities of the large number of volunteers who contribute to all phases of NAC's functions and programs are coordinated.

1.5 STANDARDS AS A BASELINE

The standards developed and periodically revised by NAC are openly available for all agencies and schools for the blind to use in planning, evaluating and implementing programs. They provide a baseline from which any such organization can plan and work for strengthened services for blind and visually handicapped persons.

Throughout, they stress the need for strong, specialized agencies and schools, committed to providing quality services for this low-incidence population of persons whose very special needs normally are not adequately met by society's generic human service institutions.

At the same time, NAC's standards are linked to modern developments throughout the education, rehabilitation and social welfare fields and thus help keep the highly specialized field of work with the blind in touch with the best features of the total human services efforts in the country.

The standards are nationally based taking into account the views of consumers, professionals, administrators, and key organizations, including government and the public at large, which support services for the blind and visually handicapped.

1.6 VALUE OF THE SELF-STUDY

When the standards are utilized in the framework of a NAC self-study, an agency or school gains the greatest value from them. Conducting a self-study as part of an application for accreditation generates a whole new dimension of momentum toward improvement.

As soon as the self-study begins and long before the on-site review team arrives on the scene, the constructive effects of the self-study process become evident. Traditional practices, reexamined in the light of objective and nationally accepted standards, are seen in a fresh way. Customs long taken for granted are looked at analytically. Recognition that the sole reason for certain practices is that "they have always been done this way" often leads to decisions for immediate change. Self-evaluation infuses a new sense of vitality. The feeling that the organization is moving forward releases imaginative thinking, raises morale and fortifies resolve up and down the line.

The process of completing each section of the self-study pinpoints needed improvements for immediate, short range or long range implementation which constitutues a serviceable blueprint for planning and action. This self-study process can become a natural component of any organization's continuous management cycle of planning and evaluation.

1.7 VALUE OF THE ON-SITE REVIEW.

The NAC on-site review brings in a group of knowledgeable volunteers who concentrate their energy and experience solely for the benefit of the organization being visited. Composed of blind and sighted peers selected by NAC in consultation with the applicant organization, the on-site review team focuses during its four day visit on gaining a thorough understanding of the organization, evaluating its management and services and preparing a written report of its findings and suggestions for improvement.

NAC maintains a national roster of able and knowledgeable volunteers from various disciplines from which on-site review teams are drawn to fit the particular needs of each agency or school for the blind and visually handicapped. NAC is constantly on the alert to identify new volunteers who can contribute to this process.

The written report of the team is designed to support and augment the plans developed by the organization itself during its self-study. The report contains commendations and recommendations which are written for each management and service component of the organization. The on-site review report also is utilized to assist NAC's Commission on Accreditation in arriving at a decision about accreditation or reaccreditation.

1.8 VALUE OF ACHIEVING ACCREDITATION.

Accreditation is an achievement of which the organization justly may be proud. It signifies to all personnel, volunteers and staff, to persons served and to potential consumers, to funding sources and the community at large that the organization meets nationally accepted standards for quality services for blind or otherwise visually handicapped persons, responsible management and public accountability.

A number of groups within and related to work with the blind have taken positions in support of the values of NAC's accreditation program. The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation has called on facilities providing services to clients of state agencies for the blind to qualify for accreditation by NAC. The U. S. Commissioner of Education officially recognizes NAC as the national accreditation agency for special schools for the blind.

The General Council of Workshops for the Blind and National Industries for the Blind officially support NAC and encourage member agencies to become accredited by NAC. Resolutions in support of NAC have been approved by the American Council of the Blind, the American Association of Workers for the Blind, the Association for Education of the Visually Handicapped and the Division for the Visually Handicapped of the Council on Exceptional Children.

Other organizations, not eligible to apply for accreditation, have become sponsoring members of NAC and still others have become official supporters as a way of publically identifying with NAC's goals and achievements. A growing number of persons is joining NAC as individual "Standard Bearers" in the cause of quality services for blind and visually handicapped persons.

To an increasing extent, accreditation is becoming a criterion of eligibility for basic financial support in the form of grants from governmental agencies, philanthropic foundations, individual givers as well as from purchase-of-service contracts. Recommendations made by on-site review teams and NAC's Commission on Accreditation can be put to good use in substantiating the need for increased funding or change. Even a decision by the Commission on Accreditation to postpone or deny an application, an understandable disappointment in the short run, can be a powerful lever for positive change of a lasting nature.

Achievement of accreditation confers public recognition of the quality of the organization's management and services. It entitles the organization to become an active, voting member in the national standard-setting and accreditation body in the field of work with the blind. By becoming accredited the organization joins the ranks of other agencies and schools for the blind and visually handicapped which are publically associated with application of sound standards. Continuing accredited membership in the National Accreditation Council signifies long term commitment to participation in a structured program of self-improvement of national scope.

In short; "Go NAC!"

2. GENERAL POLICIES

The standards and accreditation program of NAC are geared to some 400 agencies and schools which provide most of the specialized direct services to blind and visually handicapped persons in the United States. These agencies and schools may be parts of government or they may be voluntary organizations or commercial enterprises, or units within them. They are eligible to apply for accreditation provided one or more of their major services are encompassed by NAC's standards.

Other criteria of eligibility are a designated governing authority (e.g., board of directors or higher official) and an officially authorized, discrete name by which the organization is identified.

These criteria are spelled out in the official Policies governing the Commission on Accreditation. The Policies may be ordered from NAC's *Publications List and Order Form*, available on request.

2.2 CONSUMER PARTICIPATION

NAC firmly believes in the value of active consumer participation in all phases of program planning, service delivery and evaluation. Agencies and schools have fundamental responsibilities to this constituency which include provision of quality services, means for consumer participation in program planning, service delivery and evaluation of results and responsiveness to expressed consumer concerns. These responsibilities are noted throughout NAC's standards.

For purposes of accreditation, consumers are defined by NAC to include:

2.2.1 Persons Served

Persons served and those who are, were or would have been eligible for some service.

2.2.2 Members of Consumer Organizations

Members of an organization or organizations of blind or otherwise visually handicapped persons, the primary purposes of which are the welfare of its membership and the improvement of services.

2.2.3 Consumer Representatives

Persons who represent a consumer by relationship (such as a parent, other family member or legal guardian) or by designation (by an organization of blind or otherwise visually handicapped persons or by an individual consumer).

2.3 GRANDFATHER CLAUSE

The qualifications of personnel employed by agencies and schools are important elements in the quality of service provided. NAC's standards include specified qualifications for various categories of personnel employed by agencies or schools seeking accreditation. Typically the standards provide for employment of persons who meet recognized certification or licensing criteria, as well as additional specialized qualifications for working with blind and visually handicapped persons.

As a matter of practical necessity, NAC established the date of September 1, 1972 as the limit for employment of new personnel who did not meet the qualifications of personnel as set forth in *THE COMSTAC REPORT*. New employees hired after that date are expected to be qualified in accordance with the standards and their subsequent revisions. Revised standards take effect no later than six months after publication.

Persons employed in the same jobs for five years prior to September 1, 1972, who are either promoted or who transfer employment in similar capacities to other organizations after that date, also are considered qualified under the "grandfather clause" for purpose of NAC's accreditation program.

2.4 EXTENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH NAC STANDARDS

Because NAC's standards are designed to stimulate improvements in management and services throughout the field, the Commission on Accreditation recognizes that no organization can meet every NAC standard to the fullest extent all of the time.

The recognition of accreditation is earned when, in the judgment of the Commission, the applicant organization demonstrates an acceptable level of quality of service, administrative effectiveness and public accountability accompanied by clear evidence of willingness and capacity to make needed improvements.

When deficiencies exist, the organization's plans for their remedy and its capacity to effect the needed improvements within a reasonable amount of time are weighed carefully by the Commission. Perfection is not necessary, but forward movement is expected.

It should be noted that the Commission recognizes the right of any organization to decide what services it provides. The Commission encourages organizations to test out innovative services and practices.

An application for accreditation is viewed in the light of the organization's own stated philosophy of service, its established goals and objectives, as well as in relation to its actual performance in the light of NAC's standards.

2.5 ADDITION AND REVISION OF STANDARDS

One of the first tasks faced by NAC when it began operations in 1967 was the transformation of the standards in *THE COMSTAC REPORT* into instruments for use in accreditation. This was accomplished in 1968 by the publication of separate self-study and evaluation guides for "general agencies," "sheltered workshops" and "residential schools."

In 1970, the Commission on Standards added another set of standards and a self-study and evaluation guide on production of reading materials (*Section D-7*).

In 1974, the Commission on Standards began a program of systematic revision of the original standards and self-study and evaluation guides at the rate of about two per year. In 1977-78, the 1968 *Self-Study and Evaluation Guide for Residential Schools* was revised.

In 1979, these revised materials (sections *B-2* and *D-20* through *D-28*) were published along with this edition of the *Manual of Procedures*. At the same time, another self-study and evaluation guide was added on preschool services (*Section D-15*); a special section was included for self-study of service programs for which NAC has no specific program standards (*Section D-16*); *Section B-1* for "agencies" was developed as a companion to the similar guide developed for special schools (*Section B-2*); and a revised *Section F, Evaluation Summary and Report* was issued for use as the concluding step in the self-study process.

With the completion of these revisions, all of NAC's self-study and evaluation guides were combined into one series as listed on page iii.

On a continuing basis, the Commission on Standards has projects under way to revise sets of standards or to develop additional ones.

Announcements about standards projects are carried in NAC's newsletter, *The Standard-Bearer*. Broadly-based input is sought during each standards project with opportunities for comments and suggestions from accredited and non-accredited organizations in the field, consumers and consumer organizations, professional associations and interested, knowledgeable individuals.

2.6 MEDIA AVAILABILITY OF STANDARDS

NAC's standards are published in the form of self-study and evaluation guides. They are available in several media.

2.6.1 Regular Print

NAC's *Publications List and Order Form*, available upon request, may be used to purchase each self-study and evaluation guide. A discount is offered on the purchase of the complete series. Three special series are available at reduced prices. They are for general agencies, workshops and residential schools.

Self-study and evaluation guides sold by NAC are in regular print booklets, 8½ X 11" in size. The completed self-study report should be submitted to NAC by means of these booklets.

The paperback edition of *THE COMSTAC REPORT* also may be purchased by means of the *Publications List and Order Form*, as can the official Policies of the Commissions on Accreditation and Standards.

2.6.2 Braille

THE COMSTAC REPORT and the *1970 Standards for Production of Reading Materials* are available in braille through the network of regional and subregional libraries affiliated with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress (NLS).

Information about the availability in braille of the self-study and evaluation guides may be obtained from NAC.

2.6.3 Recordings

Recording for the Blind, Inc. has prepared tape recorded editions of the self-study and evaluation guides. They are available to eligible blind and visually handicapped persons who participate in self-studies, on-site reviews and to those who simply wish to learn more about NAC's standards. They can be provided on either 15/16 ips, four track cassettes, or 1-7/8 ips, four track, 5" open reels.

In order to borrow these guides in recorded form the reader must be registered with Recording for the Blind. This may be accomplished by completing an "Application for Service," available directly from Recording for the Blind, Inc., 215 East 58th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022.

Also, the Talking Book edition of *THE COMSTAC REPORT* may be borrowed by blind and physically handicapped readers through the National Library Service system.

2.6.4 Large Print via Microfiche

NAC's self-study and evaluation guides have been accessioned into the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC system) developed by the U. S. Office of Education. ERIC is now supported and operated by the National Institute of Education. ERIC provides access to the literature in education and rehabilitation through a series of specialized clearinghouses.

Each self-study and evaluation guide may be purchased from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service in microfiche (MF) and paper copy (HC). Microfiche is a 4 X 6" sheet of microfilm capable of containing up to 96 pages of text.

Certain microfiche reading machines are capable of high magnification which makes the text comparable to large print, much like closed circuit television reading machines.

The self-study and evaluation guides are included in the ERIC index system. Each document has its own order (ED) number. These numbers may be obtained from the ERIC Index, or NAC will provide a complete list upon request. Prices and an order form may be obtained from the following:

ERIC Document Reproduction Service
Computer Microfilm International Corp.
P.O. Box 190
Arlington, VA 22210

Another national repository of information which has included NAC's self-study and evaluation guides is the National Technical Information Service of the U. S. Department of Commerce. For further information, write to NAC.

3. TEN STEPS TO ACCREDITATION

The process of applying for accreditation entails ten steps:

- Decision to make formal application
- Preparing the statement of philosophy of service
- Planning and conducting the self-study
- Submitting the report to NAC
- Planning for the on-site review
- The preliminary visit
- The on-site review
- Receipt of the on-site review report
- Decision by the Commission on Accreditation
- Becoming an accredited member of NAC

4. DECISION TO MAKE FORMAL APPLICATION

The application process begins with the decision of the organization's governing authority to proceed.

Seeking accreditation involves a major policy decision. The official approval and backing of the governing authority, therefore, is essential before the organization goes ahead. It is suggested that the governing authority, whether it be a Board of Directors, or a designated higher official within a parent organization, review this *Manual of Procedures* before making this important decision. Also, the organization is encouraged to call upon NAC for resolution of questions, further information and consultation as this decision is being considered.

A clear understanding is needed of the time and expense involved in carrying through the ten steps noted above. It should also be understood that achieving accreditation carries with it certain responsiblilities of maintaining accredited status including payment of annual dues, implementation of plans for improvement, reporting of progress to NAC and participation in the corporate affairs of NAC.

Formal application for accreditation is made by submitting an application form to NAC accompanied by a one-time, non-refundable, application fee of $150. Completing this step gives official expression to the organization's intention to proceed with the application, and potentially becoming an accredited member of NAC, in conformity with the policies and procedures of the Commission on Accreditation, NAC's bylaws and other such rules and regulations as may be promulgated from time to time by its Board of Directors.

5. PREPARING THE STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY OF SERVICE

5.1 REASONS FOR THE STATEMENT

Every agency and school has a philosophy of service, derived from its basic purpose, which guides its day-to-day operations and shapes the nature of its services. Often, the philosophy of service has been formed, refined and handed down as an oral or even unspoken tradition.

A philosophy of service which is set forth clearly and succintly in writing helps give a common focus to the activities of all persons associated with the organization including the persons served. Broadly-based participation in development and periodic review of the philosophy assists in maintaining its relevancy to all efforts, in providing a unified sense of direction and in faciliting internal consistency and efficiency.

The written statement of philosophy of service is a valuable underpinning for the organization's planning and evaluation components. It is useful for long range planning, for preparing annual program and financial plans, for developing individualized education programs or service plans, and generally, for fostering an advocacy-oriented climate toward the persons served.

If an up-to-date statement of philosophy of service is not available, preparation of such a statement is an essential early step in preparing for the self-study. In many cases, revision of an existing statement may be all that is needed: in other instances the organization may have to "start from scratch."

Each person involved in self-study will need a copy as a basic reference throughout the process.

Also, the statement of philosophy of service is the first item included in the packet of materials prepared by the organization for all on-site review team members (see section *B-1* or *B-2*). The statement is appended by NAC to the report of the on-site review to assist the reader (including the members of NAC's Commission on Accreditation) in gaining the proper perspective on the findings of the visiting team.

5.2 RECOMMENDED METHODOLOGY

Because of its many values to the organization, the statement of philosophy of service should be developed (or reviewed if one is already in existence) by persons who bring to bear different points of view. Consumers, members of the governing authority, the school or agency administrators, teachers, specialists and other professionals, government and community planning individuals, related groups and interested and knowledgeable individuals are among the persons who should be involved in the preparation or review of the statement.

Responsibility for proposing an up-to-date statement of philosophy of service is usually assigned to the self-study coordinating committee. Drafts are usually circulated or used in group discussions with comments and suggestions for improvement being directed to the coordinating committee.

The document should represent the consensus of all those associated with the organization. Unanimity on all points should not be expected because of the complexity of the subject and the fact that each contributor brings a unique point of view. The finished work should be a statement that is acceptable to all.

5.3 APPROVAL BY GOVERNING AUTHORITY

When the coordinating committee has prepared a final draft of the statement, it should be submitted to the governing authority for review.

The governing authority should be sure that the statement is consistent with the organization's legal base, its established policies and with the resources that reasonably can be expected to be available. The statement of philosophy of service is expected to guide the actions of the governing authority and, therefore, must be acceptable to it.

When the governing authority is satisfied with the statement, it gives its formal approval and adopts the statement, subject to later revision as conditions may warrant. When adopted, the statement should be given wide distribution, including all persons who are involved in the self-study.

The copy of the approved statement submitted to NAC should carry the date it was adopted by the governing authority.

5.4 CONTENT

Developing or up-dating the statement of philosophy of service implements specific standards in *Section C-1, Function and Structure* (1.4 through 1.4.3).

These standards identify three basic parts of the statement to reflect the unique nature of each agency or school for the blind and visually handicapped, as follows:

5.4.1 Purpose

The statement opens with an explanation of the purposes of the agency or school taking into account such pertinent factors as:

- Explanation of why specialized services for the blind and visually handicapped are needed and why such services require a specialized agency or school to deliver them
- Legal mandates (frequently cited are key documents including the organization's authorizing legal instruments such as the charter or articles of incorporation, enabling legislation, official regulations, executive orders or judicial opinions)
- Official policy set by the governing authority (if the governing authority has set basic policy which sharpens the purpose of the organization, such policy should be reflected in the stated purpose)
- The specific population(s) of blind and visually handicapped persons served in relation to key eligibility criteria such as age, extent of visual impairment or multihandicapping conditions
- The geographic area served by the organization stressing its primary service area
- Major impact of current legislation and funding

5.4.2 Services

The statement includes a descriptive listing of each service program in reference to the following:

- The specific population served and the principal goal of each service
- The extent to which individualized service or education programs are developed and utilized
- The relationships among these services and the services provided by other organizations

5.4.3 Rights of Consumers

The statement concludes with a description of the organization's commitment to advocacy on behalf of its consumers and general provisions for exercise of their rights through participation in the affairs of the organization. (Note: "rights of consumers" are defined in standards 1.7 through 1.7.6.2 in *Section C-1, Function and Structure.)*

5.5 USE OF STATEMENT IN SELF-STUDY

As noted above, each person participating in the self-study should have ready access to the statement of philosophy of service throughout the self-study. Making the statement available is a good activity to "kick off" the project.

In addition, the statement is incorporated in the packet of materials called for in sections *B-1, Agency Profile*, and *B-2, School Profile*. It also is appended to the on-site review report.

6. PLANNING AND CONDUCTING THE SELF-STUDY

6.1 ADVANCE PLANNING

Careful preparation and planning in advance assist in conducting the self-study in an efficient manner. Key personnel find it helpful to review this ***Manual of Procedures*** to determine which self-study and evaluation guides should be purchased. NAC is glad to assist in selecting the appropriate materials as the "table of contents" of the self-study is drawn up.

6.1.1 Description of Self-Study and Evaluation Guides

The various sections listed on page iii (as amended from time to time) comprise NAC's various self-study and evaluation guides. Each *C* and *D* section contains a set of standards for use by self-study to evaluate a part of the organization's management and service programs.

The two *B* Sections (*B-1, Agency Profile* and *B-2, School Profile*) contain instructions for preparing a packet of informative materials for members of the on-site review team.

The five *C* sections on administrative functions are used by all organizations, while the appropriate *D* sections are matched up to each organization's service programs. *Section D-16, Other Service Program* is used for service programs not included in any other self-study and evaluation guide. Some of the *D* sections are designed primarily for the services provided by "agencies" and others are intended primarily for use by specialized (residential) schools. This is explained at the bottom of page iii.

An *E* form is used to summarize the background and work assignments of each member of the administrative, professional and technical staff.

Finally, *Section F* provides the organization with the opportunity to pull together the principal findings of its self-study and to set down its major plans for improvement.

6.1.2 Coordinating Committee

It is recommended that a coordinating committee be appointed to plan and monitor the conduct of the self-study. This committee should work with each subcommittee involved in the self-study and review the various completed sections as they become ready. The coordinating committee also should assure that the complete self-study report is properly assembled for submission to NAC.

One person should be designated to chair the coordinating committee. If the organization is governed by a board, one of its members may be selected to serve in this capacity. In such case, the board member should be available to chair meetings of the coordinating committee and to become generally familiar with the work as it progresses. If the organization is responsible to a designated higher position within a parent agency, a member of the general advisory committee is a likely candidate to chair the coordinating committee. Some organizations, may wish to assign the chairmanship to a key member of the administrative staff or to a leader from the community. In any event, provision should be made for sufficient staff assistance to the coordinating committee to enable it to get its work done efficiently.

Other members of the coordinating committee, as well as of the various self-study subcommittees, should be chosen in keeping with the Policies of the Commission on Accreditation which call for a broad base of participation in the self-study process. Members of all these committees should be drawn from the organization's governing or general advisory board, its staff, its consumers, including men and women suggested by organizations of blind or other visually handicapped persons, from persons representing community planning and funding bodies, cooperating agencies and purchasers of service, from professional and lay leaders in the community and others the organization deems may make significant contributions. Again, staff assistance should be provided to each subcommittee.

This list is not exhaustive: the intent should be to constitute broadly representative committees which are knowledgeable and effective.

There is no ideal size of the committees. Enough persons should be included to assure representation from various components within the organization and from other groups noted above. At the same time, the groups should be so constituted that they can meet when needed and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

6.1.3 First Tasks of Coordinating Committee

In preparation for an orderly and smoothly running self-study, the coordinating committee has four initial tasks:

- Preparing the statement of philosophy of service as noted above
- Proposing to NAC a "table of contents" of all sections to be included in the self-study
- Establishing a subcommittee structure related to the agreed upon self-study sections
- Preparing timetables to facilitate timely completion of all parts of the self-study report

6.1.4 Table of Contents

After carefully reviewing the organization's programs in relation to NAC's self-study and evaluation guides (see page iii) a list of sections to be used in the self-study should be drawn up. This list comprises a proposed table of contents for the self-study and the resulting report.

The proposed table of contents is cleared with NAC early in the planning for the self-study. NAC reviews the proposed table of contents and advises on the current editions of the self-study and evaluation guides which should be used. Also, NAC may suggest the use of additional guides for completeness. NAC will advise on the possible use of new or revised sections which are expected to be ready in the near future.

NAC will help resolve any questions about the applicability of various sections and other concerns which may arise. For example, when the table of contents is cleared, NAC frequently is able to make a preliminary determination of the number of persons who will be needed for the on-site review. (See page 22 for a summary of the factors which are taken into account to determine the size of the team.)

Throughout the entire application process, the NAC staff is available to consult on any matters of interest to the organization.

6.1.5 Subcommittee Structure.

Once the table of contents has been cleared with NAC, the coordinating committee devises a plan to ensure that each section of the self-study is thoroughly prepared by knowledgeable persons.

Subcommittees provide an efficient mechanism for making the detailed evaluations needed to complete each section. It is recommended that a different subcommittee, with its own chairman, be formed for each section listed in the table of contents. Subcommittee members should include persons closely familiar with the activities covered by the section. Others should be chosen from among the categories identified in the Policies of the Commission on Accreditation as noted above (see part 6.1.2).

As in the case of the coordinating committee itself, consumer participation and involvement of "outside talent" on each subcommittee add to the value the organization can be expected to derive from the self-study process. The combination of staff expertise and broadly-based input to the work of the subcommittee strengthens the usefulness of the resulting report.

NAC staff is happy to work with the organization in helping to identify various categories of persons that can be invited to serve on the subcommittees. Toward this end, the coordinating committee is invited to send to NAC a preliminary list of the various categories of persons under consideration for each subcommittee. NAC will review the list and offer suggestions to help in establishing a balanced and workable subcommittee structure.

Fresh insights and specific suggestions for improvement should be expected from each subcommittee. The intent of the subcommittee should be to "tell it like it is" and to consider plans for strengthening performance to meet particular standards when indicated. Practical improvements often can be made right away so that evaluations included in the completed self-study report reflect an improved level of functioning than existed before the self-study began. Provision is made in the self-study and evaluation guides for subcommittees to record ideas for improvements which are planned for implementation at a later time.

The practical application of subcommittee findings makes the self-study process "come alive" for the participants.

Sufficient copies of the self-study and evaluation guides should be obtained so that they can be shared conveniently among the subcommittee members. (See pages 8-9 for information on ordering copies in inkprint, braille, tape recorded and microfiche forms.)

6.1.6 Timetables

The coordinating committee should give careful consideration to the amount of time which will be needed to complete the self-study and to get the completed report off to NAC. The amount of time and the particular period selected differs with each organization. Generally speaking, timing should relate to a period within which the organization can accomplish the self-study without undue disruption to every day work needs or interruption by major occurances such as the annual financial planning cycle, or, in the case of schools, summer vacation.

The usual range of time needed for the total self-study process is 5-18 months, starting from the time of the first meeting of the coordinating committee to the time the completed report is shipped to NAC. The time needed for the actual conduct of the self-study may range from 3 to 13 months. The coordinating committee needs to start ahead of time and has some concluding work to do after the subcommittees have completed the main part of the process.

Several deadlines should be established for each subcommittee to report to the coordinating committee on progress (including preliminary findings, suggested plans for improvement and any problems which might have been encountered) and for submission of its final report.

The coordinating committee also should set a date for assembling all copies of *Section E, Individual Staff Member Information Form* for each member of the administrative, professional and technical staff including paraprofessionals, aides, houseparents and residence supervisors. (Typists, clerks, custodians, cooks, drivers and similar employees need not complete this form).

When the various subcommittee reports are done, the coordinating committee should review them before preparing *Section F, Evaluation Summary and Report*. This section should be approved by the governing authority before sending it (and the other sections) to NAC, since it constitutes a major planning commitment.

A suggested timetable for the self-study is presented on the following page.

Suggested Timetable for Self-Study

Steps	Range of Months for Each Step	Months Elapsed from Step 2
1. Decision to Make Formal Application	0	0
2. Formation of Coordinating Committee	0	0
3. Planning and Preparation by the Coordinating Committee		
. Drafting and approval of Statement of Philosophy of Service . Developing and clearing with NAC the table of contents . Establishing subcommittees and securing self-study and evaluation guides from NAC . Preparation of timetables and launching the self-study	1 - 2	1 - 2
4. Conducting the Self-Study		
. Subcommittees work and report to coordinating committee . Final review of each section by coordinating committee and resolution of all subcommittee questions	3 - 13	4 - 15
5. Conclusion		
. Preparation of *Section F, Evaluation Summary and Report* by coordinating committee and its approval by the governing authority . Completion of *B-1, Agency Profile* or *B-2, School Profile*, as appropriate, and collection of all *E* forms	1 - 2	5 - 17
6. Submission of Report to NAC		
. Preparation of "clean" copies of all materials and duplication of requisite number of each item . Shipment to NAC	1	6 - 18

6.2 SUBCOMMITTEES AT WORK

After the advance preparation and planning has been completed, the full self-study activities begin with the activation of the various subcommittees.

6.2.1 Launching the full self-study

It is appropriate to start off the full self-study with a general meeting of all persons to be involved in the various subcommittees. A few words of introduction from the chairman or a member of the governing authority will serve to emphasize the importance attached to the process.

The various subcommittees can be announced and the chairmen of each introduced.

Working materials can be distributed and discussed at this time. A copy of the statement of philosophy of service can be distributed to each person along with a copy of the projected timetable for completion of the process. Subcommittee chairmen can be given copies of the particular sections on which their subcommittees will concentrate.

General guidelines concerning availability of meeting space for subcommittees can be outlined. Conditions relating to released time for subcommittee activities may be announced. Subcommittees should be encouraged to plan meeting times which will be convenient to as many persons as possible without undue disruption to on-going work and other commitments.

General and specific questions can be aired and the basic expectations set forth so that everyone starts out with a common frame of reference. Provisions should be established for communications among subcommittees and the coordinating committee.

Agreement should be reached on how to handle suggestions for improvements which are stimulated by evaluations of current practices and activities in the light of the statement of philosophy of service and NAC's standards.

It is appropriate for each subcommittee to meet for a few minutes at the conclusion of the general meeting to plan the time and place of their first working sessions.

6.2.2 Subcommittee Activities

Within the guidelines set forth at the first general meeting, each subcommittee should hold its meetings and begin reviewing the program it is studying. Enough copies of the self-study and evaluation guides should be made available so that they may be shared conveniently among subcommittee members. Each individual should be given the opportunity to review the section in advance of the first working session of the subcommittee.

Subjects which are appropriate for the first working session include:

- Discussion of scope of standards
- Discussion of questions of interpretation of wording
- Developing a list of materials and documents which need to be prepared, assembled or collected for use during the self-study
- Review of "Instructions" for completing the section including the use of the evaluation rating scale (see Appendix B)
- Review of target dates established by the coordinating committee for reporting on progress and submission of the completed section including recommendations for coordinating committee approval
- Assignment of tasks to be accomplished by the next subcommittee meeting
- Review of procedures established by the Coordinating Committee pertaining to possible improvements suggested in the course of the self-study
- Development of a schedule for future meetings of the subcommittee which will maximize participation by all members

6.2.3 Coordinating Committee Responsibilities

While the subcommittees are working on completing the various sections of the self-study, the coordinating committee should remain active as arbiter, facilitator and monitor.

In addition to being available to the subcommittees to help work out problems or questions which might arise, the coordinating committee probably will ask for regular progress reports from each subcommittee around the midpoint of the period allocated for the subcommittee work. Use of staggered deadlines for completion of the subcommittee reports could provide a manageable flow of materials for review and approval by the coordinating committee throughout of the self-study. The coordinating committee also may want to report, from time to time, on progress to the governing authority.

The coordinating committee should consider procedures for encouraging the implementation of improvements which can be accomplished without difficulty during the course of the self-study.

The coordinating committee needs to monitor the development of the packet of materials called for in the B section so that this part of the self-study will be ready for final review when all the other sections have been completed.

When all the subcommittee reports have been received, reviewed, and accepted, the coordinating committee should prepare *Section F, Evaluation Summary and Report.* This Guide is provided to enable the organization to identify the major developments which have taken place in recent years, and to assign priority to the major improvements to be undertaken in the future.

7. SUBMITTING THE REPORT TO NAC

7.1 THREE COPIES NEEDED

When all the sections of the self-study have been completed, accepted by the coordinating committee and approved by the governing authority, the report is ready to be submitted to NAC.

Three copies are requested of all sections (*B-1* or *B-2* through *F*). Three originals may be made, although the organization may find it easier and more reliable to make duplicates from a clear master copy. Typing is preferred for narrative portions such as "comments", etc. If a copying machine is utilized for duplication, the organization should retain the master copies and send only duplicates to NAC. Although not essential, a machine which can print on both sides of a sheet is preferred to reduce bulk of the duplicates.

7.2 ADDITIONAL COPIES

NAC may need additional copies of some sections. For example, the packet of materials assembled to make up *Section B-1* or *B-2* as well as *Section F* are sent by NAC to each team member, so that more than three sets may be needed.

Generally the three basic copies of the other sections are sufficient to provide team members which copies of those sections to which they are assigned, but occasionally, additional copies of particular sections are needed.

As noted earlier, NAC frequently is in a position to make a preliminary determination on the size of the team (hence the number of copies of the *B* and *F* sections) at the time the table of contents is cleared. If this has not been done at that time, NAC will do so when the completed report is received and reviewed.

7.3 SHIPPING

All shipments of completed self-study materials should be made in secure packages and sent by a class of shipping which facilitates prompt and safe arrival. NAC's office is served by both the U.S. Postal Service and United Parcel Service. Use of a receipt returned to sender upon delivery may help in tracing shipping difficulties which might develop.

In any event, NAC will acknowledge receipt of the self-study materials and will review them for completeness.

8. PLANNING FOR THE ON-SITE REVIEW

After the self-study report has been accepted as complete, NAC initiates plans for the next major phase in the accreditation process, the on-site review.

The on-site review provides for a visit by a team of outside peers to evaluate the findings of the self-study. The review team prepares a written report to the organization and to NAC's Commission on Accreditation. The report conveys commendations and recommendations based on the judgments of the team as a whole.

The size of an on-site review team generally ranges between five and nine persons. The minimum number of visitors is three and can range to a high of eighteen in the case of a very large organization with many facilities and services. Factors which determine the size of a review team are the number of different services provided, size of staff, the number of persons served and the number of facilities and the distances between them.

Team members are selected by NAC on the basis of their qualifications in administration and services provided by the organization. Normally, the team includes blind as well as sighted persons. Members are selected from a roster of volunteers maintained by the Commission on Accreditation. This roster includes persons who are members of different professions and disciplines, specialists in particular administrative or service functions and generalists in work with the blind or allied fields. Persons are nominated for the roster by accredited organizations, universities, and other agencies and associations including organizations of blind or visually handicapped persons. NAC welcomes from all sources recommendations of new persons who might be considered for the roster.

Members of on-site review teams volunteer their knowledge and time. The organization being visited pays only for their costs of transportation, lodging, meals and incidental expenses related to the on-site visit. Efforts are made to select the members of the team from the same region of the country as the organization to hold down the expenses of transporation.

The on-site review normally takes place within four months after NAC receives a satisfactorily completed self-study report. The visit extends over four days including travel time for team members. The review usually starts on a Sunday afternoon and ends around noon the following Wednesday.

9. PRELIMINARY VISIT

Well before the date scheduled for the arrival of the on-site review team, the team's chairman and/or a NAC staff member make a brief visit to the organization in order to make sure that everything is ready. During the preliminary visit, usually an overnight trip, the hotel and other arrangements are reviewed, the detailed work schedule for the on-site review is discussed and adjusted if needed, plans for reimbursement of team members are confirmed, plans for consumer and collateral conferences are set, and any other matters are taken up which will help provide for a smooth on-site review.

The preliminary visit usually involves the organization's chief administrator, the chairman of the self-study coordinating committee and a representative of the governing authority.

The transportation and living expenses of the preliminary visitor(s) are borne by the applicant organization.

10. THE ON-SITE REVIEW

With the assistance of the organization being visited, NAC develops a detailed schedule for the four day on-site review.

10.1 SUNDAY

Team orientation meetings generally begin on Sunday afternoon in a conference room in the team's hotel or motel.

Key personnel from the organization usually meet informally with the team over dinner to get acquainted and to provide an opportunity for the organization to discuss its statement of philosophy of service with the team. Also, the team's chairman briefly discusses the purpose of the visit and the general evaluation methods to be used.

After dinner the team meets in its workroom at the hotel or motel to continue its planning for the visit.

10.2 EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Until about 3:00 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, the team visits the organization's various facilities and confers with members of the staff and governing authority, volunteers, consumers and personnel from other agencies with which the organization cooperates. Also, the team observes training sessions, classes and other programs in operation, reads individual service and other records, reviews written policies and manuals and otherwise becomes thoroughly acquainted with the organization.

The on-site visitors function as a team. Their time schedule is carefully designed for maximum fact-finding activities. The review team is organized into subcommittees corresponding to the various sections of the self-study report. Each subcommittee normally interviews the chairman of the corresponding self-study subcommittee, staff assigned to that program and other individuals and groups on a prescheduled basis.

Each team subcommittee presents its findings to the team as a whole during evening work sessions. The team prepares and approves the final, written on-site review report. This group process enhances the objectivity and validity of the final report by reflecting the consensus of the entire team.

10.3 REPORT WRITING

On Monday and Tuesday evenings and Wednesday morning, reports are drafted, discussed and approved by the team at the hotel or motel. The aim is to produce a nearly finished report by the end of the visit. The team's report is copy-edited and duplicated by NAC and the finished report sent back to the organization as expeditiously as possible (normally within five weeks).

10.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality characterizes the entire accreditation process. The organization seeking accreditation necessarily shares sensitive information with NAC in its self-study report and during the on-site visit.

The on-site review team relies on frank and open discussion and review of actual records and documents to gain an accurate understanding of the organization's operations and plans. Team members are cautioned not to discuss the on-site visit and the team's findings after they have returned home. This principle of confidentiality extends to discussions held during the visit, to documents and records examined during the on-site review. Thus, agencies and schools seeking accreditation are assured that all details of their organizations are considered in confidence by NAC.

NAC and the Commission on Accreditation make no public disclosure about any information received in the course of an application nor about any discussions or decisions made by the Commission other than the granting or withdrawing of accreditation. NAC does, however, encourage an organization to conduct its self-study in an open fashion and to make wide use of the report of the on-site review team. It should be emphasized that NAC itself does not share the report with other individuals or organizations unless it has the express, written permission of the applicant organization.

11. RECEIPT OF THE ON-SITE REVIEW REPORT

Three copies of the finished on-site review team's report are sent by NAC to the organization's chief administrator. Additional copies occasionally are sent directly to the governing authority. Members of NAC's Commission on Accreditation receive a copy of the report in advance of the Commission's meeting.

The organization is afforded an opportunity to submit to the Commission on Accreditation comments and supplemental materials relevant to the facts and conclusions in the report and is provided a 30 day period in which to do so.

It should be noted that the on-site review team is not called upon to make any recommendation about whether or not accreditation should be awarded, and the team's report does not contain any such recommendation.

12. DECISION BY THE COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION

Responsibility for decisions concerning accreditation is vested in NAC's Commission on Accreditation based on Policies approved by the Board of Directors. The Commission decides whether accreditation is awarded, postponed or denied.

12.1 FACTORS CONSIDERED BY THE COMMISSION

An application for accreditation is placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Commission after the on-site review and the receipt of any comments or supplemental materials the organization may choose to submit. In making a decision about accreditation, the Commission takes into account the self-study conducted by the

organization, the report of the on-site review team, any comments and supplemental materials submitted relevant to the facts and conclusions in that report, and other pertinent information that may be received by the Commission up to the time of its deliberations.

12.2 RANGE OF DECISIONS

The Commission's governing Policies define three kinds of decisions.

12.2.1 Award of Accreditation

Accreditation is awarded upon the Commission's conclusion that the organization provides quality services in keeping with its stated philosophy of service and in substantial conformance with NAC's standards; that the organization is soundly administered and publically accountable, also in substantial conformance with NAC's standards; and that, where improvements should be made, the organization is willing to make them and gives evidence of being able to do so within a reasonable period of time.

Accreditation or reaccreditation, is awarded for a specific period ranging from two to five years. It is not uncommon for the Commission to award accreditation for a period of approximately two years. Extension beyond two years is made upon review of reports of progress in implementing particular recommendations specified by the Commission.

12.2.2 Postponement

The decision on accreditation may be postponed for specific reasons and for a stated period of time (up to two years). This provides the applicant organization with the opportunity to address the specific reasons cited and report its actions to the Commission before the decision is made.

12.2.3 Denial

When an application is denied, the Commission indicates the reasons for the decision and what specific improvements should be made before reapplication.

12.3 APPEAL

The Commission's Policies provide for appeal of an adverse decision. NAC gives no publicity to a decision to postpone or deny accreditation. The organization is encouraged, however, to make all possible constructive use including public disclosure of an adverse decision to inform the interested community and to gain support for the suggested improvements.

13. BECOMING AN ACCREDITED MEMBER OF NAC

Following a decision to accredit, the Commission on Accreditation officially notifies the applicant organization.

The initial payment of dues signifies that the organization has joined the ranks of NAC accredited members as a fully qualified partner in a national program of recognition for quality of services which are responsibly administered and accountable to the public.

Accredited membership in NAC entitles the organization to display in all its facilities the official *Certificate of Accreditation* and to use NAC's logo (imprinted on the back outside cover of this booklet) on stationery and other printed materials.

In becoming accredited, the organization commits itself to an on-going program of improvement. Annual progress reports are submitted in order to keep the Commission on Accreditation informed of the steps being taken to implement its recommendations and those of the on-site review team, to report on significant developments which have taken place in the past year and to describe the organization's current plans for further improvement.

The schedule for annual progress reporting is keyed to the accredited organization's own program planning and fiscal cycle in order to integrate the accreditation program with the organization's management systems.

To contribute to the maintenance of NAC's accreditation function, annual dues are paid at the rate of one twentieth of one percent (.0005) of each fiscal year's gross operating expenses of the accredited member. The minimum dues is set at $50: the maximum is $1000.

Upon achieving accreditation, the organization becomes a voting member of the corporation. As such, the organization becomes a full participant in shaping NAC's affairs through election of directors and voting on other business matters which are determined by the corporate members.

Accredited members are urged to attend membership meetings so that they can cast their votes. Annual membership meeting are held in a different part of the country each year in order to encourage attendance by persons who are interested in NAC's activities. The membership meetings, as well as meetings of NAC's Board of Directors, are open to the public.

Every five years, a reaccreditation process -- involving preparation of a self-reassessment report, an on-site review, and a formal decision by the Commission on Accreditation -- affords the organization the opportunity to reaffirm the quality of its administration and services.

14. COSTS

Generally speaking, the dollar costs of seeking and maintaining accreditation vary according to the size of the agency or school.

For the most important and valuable part of the accreditation process -- the self-study -- it is difficult to assign a precise cost at all. It is expected that all persons associated with an organization will contribute their ideas and best judgments in a team effort to evaluate current activities and to plan for strengthened services. Many have said that the self-study process alone is the most valuable part of the accreditation process.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to budget some amount of money to seeking accreditation and maintaining accredited status. For the initial application these costs involve purchase of self-study materials, reimbursement of expenses of the on-site review team, and when accreditation is achieved, payment of annual dues. Appendix A is designed to help estimate these costs.

Maintenance of accreditation involves payment of annual dues and costs of reaccreditation each five years, a process which is basically similar to the initial application process.

These dollars go a long way, however. NAC's self-study materials are modestly priced to recover costs of reprinting, postage and handling. On-site review team members volunteer their time and expertise to produce a comprehensive report designed to be truly helpful to the organization. Further, review and action by NAC's Commission on Accreditation (also made up of volunteers) lend national credibility and local leverage to the organization's efforts to improve and to obtain broader support and acceptance.

Costs are well worth the benefits!

APPENDIX A

ACCREDITATION BUDGET WORKSHEET

1.	APPLICATION FEE (one-time, nonrefundable)	$ 150
2.	PURCHASE OF SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDES (Current prices, which are set at or below the cost of printing, are included in the *Publication List and Order Form* available on request. Each section may be ordered in the quantity needed. Additional copies may be needed in the course of the self-study.)	_____
3.	DUPLICATION OF COMPLETED REPORT (Basically, three complete sets are needed to send to NAC. Additionally, extra copies of *B-1* or *B-2* and *F* may be needed depending on the size of the on-site review team. Use of a convenient office copying machine which prints on two sides of a sheet is recommended.)	_____
4.	PRELIMINARY VISIT (chairman and NAC staff member)	
4.1	Intercity Travel (airfare plus ground travel)	_____
4.2	Lodging (two single rooms for one night at the same hotel to be occupied by review team)	_____
4.3	Meals (dinner, breakfast and lunch for two)	_____
5.	ON-SITE REVIEW	
5.1	Intercity Travel (average 750 miles round trip plus ground transportation, porter's tips, etc.)	_____
5.2	Lodging (single rooms for three nights for each team member)	_____
5.3	Conference Room (at hotel for Sunday, Monday and Tuesday afternoons and evenings and Wednesday morning)	_____

ACCREDITATION BUDGET WORKSHEET (Continued)

5.4 Meals

5.4.1 Sunday Night (organizational dinner for team members, key agency or school personnel and invited guests) $ _____

5.4.2 Breakfasts:

3 X $ _____ (average cost with tip) X _____ (number of team members) = _____

5.4.3 Lunches:[1]

3 X $ _____ (average cost with tip) X _____ (number of team members) = _____

5.4.4 Dinners:

2 X $ _____ (average cost with tip) X _____ (number of team members) = _____

5.4.5 Coffee, tea, etc., for team's hotel workroom _____

6 MISCELLANEOUS

6.1 Team's Typist (a temporary typist to work at the hotel 4-5 hours on Tuesday afternoon and evening and 4-5 hours on Wednesday morning) _____

6.2 Shipping (NAC requests that team's workbooks and materials be shipped back to NAC at the conclusion of the visit.) _____

6.3 Other _____ _____

6.4 _____ _____

7. FIRST DUES PAYMENT[2]

.0005 X $ _____ (last fiscal year's gross operating expenses) = _____

Total $ _____

1. If the organization has a cafeteria or lunchroom, it usually is satisfactory for the noon meal.

2. The first payment may be prorated for the months left in the fiscal year depending on when the Commission on Accreditation makes a favorable decision.

APPENDIX B

EVALUATION RATING SYSTEM USED IN *C* and *D* SECTIONS

Each *C* and *D* section, published or reprinted in 1979 and afterwards, includes the following rating system as part of the instructions on the inside front cover.

"**RATING.** In the parentheses ( ) preceding each standard, enter the letter representing the final evaluation reached in the self-study. Often, improvements are implemented during the self-study. In such instances, the ratings selected should represent conditions at the end of the self-study.

E – **Excellent.** The standard is met fully or exceeded.

S – **Satisfactory.** The standard is met substantially.

A – **Adequate.** The standard is met fairly well but some improvements could be made.

P – **Poor.** The standard is met only partially and improvements should be made.

M – **Minimal.** The standard is met to a small extent or not at all and substantial improvements should be made.

NA – **Not Applicable.** The standard does not apply for reasons stated under *Comments.*"

Note: NAC's 1968 self-study and evaluation guides used a two part coding system involving separate ratings of each standard and ratings of performance in relation to "evaluation questions".

Beginning in 1974 with the first revisions of the guides, the second rating system and the evaluation questions were eliminated thus simplifying the coding system. Sections published or reprinted between 1974 and 1978 use the same letter codes as given above but with somewhat different definitions.

The 1979 revised definitions as given above evolved from suggestions received from the field tests of the drafts prepared in 1977-78 as part of NAC's Education Standards Project.

LOOK FOR THIS SYMBOL OF QUALITY SERVICE

Accreditation conveys public recognition that an organization meets nationally accepted standards for quality services for blind and visually handicapped persons, responsible management and accountability.

3. PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: Start with most recent previous employment and limit to the experience most relevant to your present position within the past ten years or less.

Organization	Position	From	To

4. FORMAL ACADEMIC PREPARATION:

Name of Institution	Major	Attended: From	To	Degree	Year Awarded

5. LICENSES, CERTIFICATES, ETC. List only those which are current.

Type or Name	Issuing Agency	Date Issued	Area of Qualification

6. OTHER PREPARATION OR QUALIFICATIONS: (e.g., Formal in-service training, internship, apprenticeship, etc.) Specify giving dates, sponsoring organization, subjects covered.

_____

_____

_____

7. PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS: List current memberships in professional or technical organizations.

_____

_____

_____

8. COMMENTS ABOUT YOUR ROLE IN THE AGENCY SELF STUDY:

_____

_____

_____

9. DATE PREPARED: _____ 10. SIGNATURE: _____

INDIVIDUAL STAFF MEMBER INFORMATION FORM

INSTRUCTIONS: This form is to be completed by each administrative, professional and technical staff member. Its purpose is to provide information about the duties, work experience and educational qualifications of each such staff member. It is not used for performance evaluation.

Three completed copies for each applicable staff member accompany the full self-study or reassessment report.

Please type or print.

Last name _____ First _____

1. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION:

1.1 Name _____
First Initial Last

1.2 Name of agency _____

1.3 Department, division or unit _____

1.4 Office address _____

1.5 Indicate your primary professional or technical field (e.g. rehabilitation teaching, social work, vocational counseling, workshop management, etc.) _____

1.6 Title of present position _____

1.7 Date appointed to present position _____

1.8 Date employed by this agency _____

1.9 Name and title of immediate supervisor _____

_____

2. WORK ASSIGNMENT:

2.1 Brief job description _____

_____

_____

2.2 If you have supervisory responsibilities, indicate number and type of personnel supervised by you

_____

_____

_____

2.3 Number of hours per week regularly scheduled to work _____

2.4 Normal workday schedule: From _____ To _____

SELF-STUDY AND EVALUATION GUIDE | 1979 Edition

Evaluation Summary and Report (Program for Major Improvements)

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION COUNCIL
For Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped
79 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

INSTRUCTIONS

Before working on this, the final section of the self-study report, the organization will have completed all other pertinent sections, specifically:

> Either *B-1, Agency Profile* or *B-2, School Profile*, the five *C* sections on administration; all the *D* sections which pertain to the organization's service programs; and an *Individual Staff Member Information form (Section E)* completed by each applicable staff member.

With the foregoing information before it, the self-study coordinating committee will be in a position to assess generally the extent to which the organization is fulfilling its philosophy of service in the light of the standards. Also, in each of the *C* and *D* sections, plans for improvements will have been identified.

The final step in the self-study is to make an overall evaluation leading to a plan for major improvements established within a general order of priorities.

Three factors should be considered in developing such an order of priorities:

- A judgment on the relative importance of the various planned improvements;
- A judgment on the relative ease (in terms of cost, personnel, facilities, etc.) with which they can be effected;
- An awareness that an improvement in one program may have to be coupled with a change in another.

With these factors in mind, the achievements and plans for improvements set forth at the end of each self-study report are reviewed and consolidated in this, *Section F, Evaluation Summary and Report (Program for Major Improvements).*

Because of the future commitment expressed in this evaluation summary and report, the guidance and approval of the organization's governing authority is highly desirable. In order for the organization to achieve the full value of the self-study process the findings reported in this section should be integrated into the organization's working plans. The result is a carefully considered plan expressed in annual and long range timetables.

This section is made up of seven parts and related questions. They call for a listing or narrative response on the following subjects: 1) extent of implementation of the philosophy of services; 2) outstanding features of the organization; 3) major improvements or other changes in the recent past; 4) major improvements or other changes in the current fiscal year; 5) major improvements planned for next fiscal year; 6) major improvements for long range planning and 7) other considerations which may have impact in the future.

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National Accreditation Council
for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped

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F

This self-study and evaluation guide is designed to be used in combination with other guides, listed below, available from the National Accreditation Council. An organization undertaking a self-study in applying for accreditation needs to use the following. *A*, either *B-1* or *B-2*, all *C* sections, those *D* sections for the services provided, an *E* form for certain staff members and *F*.

Section	Title and Edition
A	*Manual of Procedures (1979)*
B-1	*Agency Profile (1979)*
B-2	*School Profile (1979)*
C-1	*Function and Structure (1977)*
C-2	*Accounting for Services and Finances (1976)*
C-3	*Personnel Administration and Volunteer Service (1968)*
C-4	*Physical Facilities (1975)*
C-5	*Public Relations and Fund Raising (1968)*
D-2A	*Orientation and Mobility Services (1977)*
D-2B	*Orientation and Mobility Services (Dog Guide Programs) (1968)*
D-3	*Rehabilitation Centers (1968)*
D-4	*Workshop Services (1976)*
D-5	*Social Services (1968)*
D-6	*Vocational Services (1976)*
D-7	*Production of Reading Materials (1970)*
D-8	*Rehabilitation Teaching Services (1977)*
D-15	*Preschool Services (from Birth to Six) (1979)*
D-16	*Other Service Program (1979)*
D-20	*Curriculum Planning and Evaluation (1979)*
D-21	*Program for Multihandicapped Students (1979)*
D-22	*Program for K-12 Students (1979)*
D-23	*Program for Independent Living (1979)*
D-24	*Educational Resources Program (1979)*
D-25	*Leisure Education (1979)*
D-26	*Residential Living Program (1979)*
D-27	*Health Services (1979)*
D-28	*Educational Diagnostic and Counseling Services (1979)*
E	*Individual Staff Member Information Form (1977)*
F	*Evaluation Summary and Report (1979)*

Sections *D-2A* through *D-8* are applicable primarily to "agencies" and *D-20* through *D-28* primarily to "schools." *D-15* is used for preschool services in any setting. Similarly, *D-16* is used by all organizations for services for which NAC does not have specific standards such as radio reading service or special summer program.

1977 - 1978

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CONTENTS

Instructions . . . . . inside front cover

Self-Study and Evaluation Guides iii

Commissions on Accreditation and Standards iv

Acknowledgments v

Program for Major Improvements

1. Philosohpy of Service 1
2. Outstanding Features of the Organization 2
3. Recent Improvements or Other Changes 3
4. Major Improvements or Other Changes in the Current Fiscal Year . . . 4
5. Major Improvements for Next Fiscal Year 5
6. Long Range Planning. 6
7. Other Considerations 7

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This edition of *Section F, Evaluation Summary and Report* replaces the separate 1968 editions for agencies and special (residential) schools.

In 1977-78, the self-study and evaluation guides for specialized schools for the blind and visually handicapped were totally revised. Drafts of the various sections were field tested including a revised version of this *Section F.* The input obtained from the successful field testing of the draft was utilized in the preparation of this new edition, which is designed for both agencies and schools.

NAC's staff under the leadership of Dr. Richard W. Bleecker, collaborated on the development of a draft of this section in 1977. Mr. Huesten Collingwood, who had served as staff administrator for the education standards project, carried major responsibility for preparation of the draft.

In November 1978, the Commission on Standards reviewed, refined and approved the draft. The following month, the Commission on Accreditation did the same. The combined thinking of both Commissions is represented in this edition. Use of this section represents the concluding procedure of the self-study process for purposes of applying for NAC accreditation or reaccreditation.

Since the development of this revised section was closely related to the revision of the self-study and evaluation guides for schools, it is appropriate to express appreciation to the following foundations which provided financial support to the education standards project:

The Bodman Foundation, New York, New York;
The J. M. Foundation, New York, New York;
M. D. Anderson Foundation, Houston, Texas;
The New York Community Trust, New York, New York;
Sumnen Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri.

EVALUATION SUMMARY AND REPORT

PROGRAM FOR MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS

1. PHILOSOPHY OF SERVICE

Based on all the findings of the self-study, to what extent do the organization's administration and services carry out the stated philosophy of service in relation to the following subjects?

1.1 *Achievement of the organization's basic purposes?*

1.2 *Adequacy (in quality and scope) of the various services?*

1.3 *Provisions for consumers to exercise their rights to participate in the affairs of the organization?*

2. OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF THE ORGANIZATION

What are the outstanding features of this organization at this time?

3. RECENT IMPROVEMENTS OR OTHER CHANGES

3.1 *What major improvements or other changes were made in the fiscal periods from five through two years ago?*

3.2 *What major improvements or other changes were made in the most recently completed fiscal year?*

4. MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS OR OTHER CHANGES IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR

What major improvements or other changes have been introduced in the current fiscal year? (Indicate which were made as a result of the self-study. Also, if they have not yet been completed, indicate when completion is expected.)

5. MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS FOR NEXT FISCAL YEAR

What major improvements are included for the plan for the next fiscal year? (Indicate which grew out of the self-study.)

6. LONG RANGE PLANNING

What major improvements are contemplated in the long range plan because they cannot be undertaken in the next fiscal year? (Indicate when their completion is projected.)

7. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

What other major considerations may have an important impact on the future of the organization? (Indicate when they are likely to occur.)

MEMBERS OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Name	Identification (job title, board member, consumer, etc.)
Chairman _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Date Completed _____ Date accepted by Governing Authority _____

Organization Name _____

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

For Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped

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